Commuting From Frascati to Rome

PLENTY of Review readers are familiar with the joys and sorrows connected with commuting in these parts. But perhaps few have done any commuting in and out of Rome. Norval Richardson, secretary of the American Embassy in the Italian capital, paints an interesting and lively picture in the January "Scribners." "To the American mind," he writes, "commuting suggests at once a mad dash from the breakfast table, at which, with one eye always on the clock, one has had time only to scald one's lips on the boiling coffee, cast a fleeting glance of longing at other good things, and run to catch the 8:15 or the 8:23. Italian commuting is conducted in quite a different manner. To begin with, an Italian is never in a hurry—a delightful quality unless one happens to have a business engagement with him; second, his breakfast consists of a simple cup of black coffee, which he usually strolls out to obtain at the nearest café; lastly, he is an early riser by nature, and during the summer months gets up with the dawn so that he may feel he has earned a right to the long siesta which every Italian takes during the heat of the day.

Refuge for The Romans

"Since the beginning of the war few Romans have cared to go far away from home, but when the parching sirocco begins to blow straight across the Mediterranean, carrying with it clouds of red sand from the Libyan Desert, some change of air becomes necessary. Frascati naturally suggests itself. It is only seventeen miles from Rome and, situated 1,000 feet above sea level, the air is fresh and cool after the heat of Roman midsummer days. Indeed, this past summer Frascati has solved the problem of 'villeggiatura' for many and various kinds of people. The hotels are filled with diplomatists holding themselves in readiness to be called at any moment to the Quirinal or the Vatican. American and English ladies who live in Rome continue their knitting for the soldiers under the cool ilex trees; and old patrician families, such as the Aldobrandini, the Lancelotti, the Torlonia, have opened their beautiful villas as the safest and most comfortable solution of where to pass the summer. Indeed, quiet little Frascati, asleep on the western slope of the Alban Hills, has suddenly become quite cosmopolitan. For the women the days pass in idleness in the fragrant and historical gardens open to the public; but the men—even in the land of 'dolce far niente'—must attend to their various occupations in Rome. This means that all through the long summer months they commute back and forth from the Eternal City to the Alban Hills. There are two ways of going into town—one by train and the other by tram. The tram is more popular with the commuter, as it is both cheaper and cooler. It is not just an ordinary streetcar, but a great two storied affair which has managed to invest itself with something of Roman dignity.

"The first morning that I joined the throng of commuters I rushed, full of American energy, down to the little piazza from which the tram starts. It was due to leave at 8 o'clock, and, though it was only fifteen minutes before that hour, no tram was yet in sight. A group of fellow commuters was seated at little tables outside a café leisurely sipping their black coffee; a number of women and children with large black eyes, carrying odd looking bundles tied up in newspaper, were sitting on benches under the trees near the tram station. They looked as if they had sat there peacefully for hours and would continue to do so all day, even if the tram failed to appear. In the middle of the piazza a hundred or more harvesters, broad sashed, golden and muscular, leaned on their scythes waiting for the padrone to arrive and hire them that day in the fields; a procession of wine-carts bound for Rome rattled slowly across the square, their brilliant colors—red, blue, yellow—making the sun seem pale in comparison; the bells on the horses rang merrily, the plumes and gay tassels of their harnesses swayed jauntily, and a lupetto—a tiny wolf-dog—perched upon the wine kegs, barked fiercely at every passerby, protecting the interests of his master, who was already asleep under the gaudy sun hood which Michael Angelo designed five hundred years ago. There were no signs anywhere of tense nerves—not a commuter even so much as looked at his watch.

True Democracy Ruleth

"At last the tram arrived and instantly the square became animated. Every one prefers the places on the upper deck—'l'imperiale'—and as those places are limited a mad scramble ensued. Diplomatic precedence goes to the wall in the rush up the narrow, winding stairs. A bersagliere in his plumed hat jostles a Roman prince; an alert vender of fruit squeezes his basket past the rotund figure of a monsignore; a contadina, her head covered in a bright handkerchief, pushes her way, regardless of every one, greatly hampered in her progress by a flask of red wine she carries under one arm and a sack under the other from which issues a plaintive protest from inviable chickens—gifts she is taking to city relatives. A large Roman matron, incumbered with a valise, almost stops up the passage in her panting efforts to be the first one up the steps. At last every one is settled, though not seated. The prince, the monsignore, and the diplomato are installed on the red plush cushions of the first class compartment below, as befits their dignity; the rest are stowed away on the wooden benches of the second class. Now an avalanche of newsboys appears, and every one is instantly hanging out of the window buying the morning edition of 'Il Messaggero.' This flutter over, the conduttrice a pretty young woman in a long gray linen duster and jaunty cap, finally tears herself away from what looks like a serious flirtation with the stationmaster, mounts the platform and blows a blast on a small brass horn hanging about her neck. In response to this mild blast the motorman reluctantly throws away his cigarette, takes his place at the steering gear, and, with a disconcerting lurch, the journey to Rome begins.

"Frascati, with its beautiful villas and cool, plashing fountains, is soon left behind. For a while the tram runs along a shady road on the side of the Alban Hills, bordered on either side by slopes which are terraced and covered with silver olive groves. Then, quite suddenly, the tram comes out onto a treeless gallery, and there, a thousand feet below, lies the whole expanse of the Campagna Romana. The sun is now well up over the Sabine Mountains and the air seems filled with a powder of gold. The bare, treeless mountains encircling the Campagna look like giant shells from the sea in their delicate coloring; the sea itself, far off to the west, burns like a thin line of fire which blinds the eye; and Rome, still wrapped in the mists of early morning, seems to shiver and shimmer and draw closer yet about the dome of Saint Peter's. . . .

"I turn from the rushing landscape to examine my fellow commuters. The thing which strikes me about them is how true to type they have remained through the centuries. In the young soldier across the way I seem to see, except for the difference in uniform, one of the Prætorian Guard. There is the same fulness across the eyes, the same high-bridged nose, the same graceful, strong carriage which must have come straight down to him from the days of the Empire. If he were only wearing his circular winter cape thrown about his shoulders in the very folds of a toga the resemblance would be complete. The Roman matron next to him!—I have seen her very likeness in one of the busts at the Capitoline Museum. And the young girl near the door!—does she not suggest in every feature and pose one of the Vestal Virgins? Yet how easily they all seem to take to this modern commuting! A sudden thought strikes me. Is commuting, after all, a modern occupation? Was it begun only for the benefit of the inhabitants of Long Island and New Jersey? My mind wanders over the past until, with a jerk, it stops twenty centuries back. How absurd! Of course, I know how; and here I have been patronizing these modern Romans for taking so easily to commuting! They devised it themselves—when Cicero opened his summer school at Tusculum on the hill above Frascati. Did not all the studiously inclined young Romans commute back and forth as their descendants are doing to-day? Indeed, over this very road where the tram is now making its noisy progress, litters were borne. It only takes a little imagination to visualize the scene. Just there, on the climbing Via Tuscolana, you may see, if you look intently, a gorgeous litter, borne with a swaying, soothing motion by dark-skinned Ethiopian slaves. Their bare feet speed silently over the smooth lava stones. Inside reclines a handsome Roman patrician—perhaps it is Petronius on the way to his Alban villa. He is reclining on cushions covered with strange silks from the Orient, the skins of wild animals cover his sandalled feet, and in his long, tapering fingers is held a roll of parchment. Mark the striking resemblance to the Roman prince sitting next to you in the tram.

"Roman emperors also commuted from their villas in the Campagna to their palaces in the Forum, with slaves to fan with jewelled plumes their royal brows. The business man, being in more haste to reach the city, probably preferred to do his commuting in a chariot drawn by four horses—a sort of forerunner of the 'business man's special,' without, however, the modern danger of ending in a hospital instead of in an office. But they had no bridge or poker to while away the time, you say? . . .

"Suddenly a loud pounding is heard on the roof, and the tram stops. Every one springs to his feet. The motorman throws up his hands and lets forth a series of picturesque oaths—'Corpo di Bacco! Che ti possino ammazzare! Madonna!' The conversation of the commuters is animated but less profane. The one word which I catch is 'troiley.' Evidently this important mechanism has slipped. Every one descends to the ground and watches with keen interest the futile efforts of the conduttrice to put the trolley back on the wire. No one offers to help her, except with suggestions made in a spirit of raillery which she answers in like coin. The motorman throws himself on the bank by the roadside, leisurely lights a cigarette, and unfolds his copy of 'Il Messaggero.' But he is watching the conduttrice out of the tail of his eye. When he sees that her face is crimson with effort, her cap falling over one ear and the trolley still remaining recalcitrant, he gets up, muttering a few imprecations against the inefficiency of women in general, and nonchalantly accomplishes the connection in a moment. The conduttrice, still red and panting, is determined at least to have her woman's privilege of the last word. 'You say that women are no good! If this war had been in the hands of women it would have been finished in one week!' The motorman cuts her short: 'In carozza, signori!'

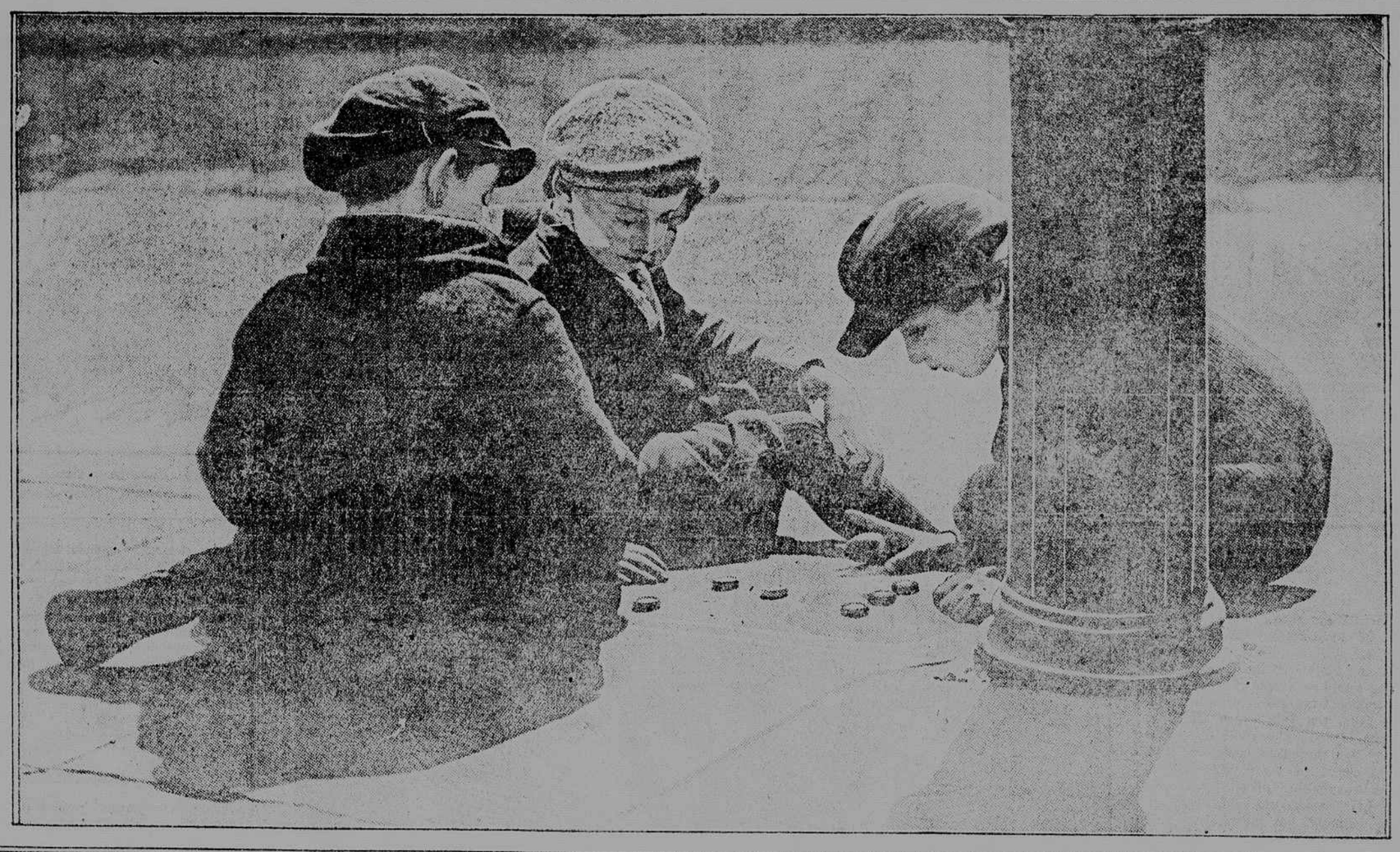
"A worse scramble than at Frascati ensues; those who have been standing now hope to get a seat. Indeed, the contadina from the 'bivio' manages to slip into the place of the Frascatana contadina. A battle of words begins, accompanied by violent gestures. The rival chickens squawk, the basket of figs rolls unheeded to the floor, the wine pours out of the flask as it is waved about to emphasize justice and right. No one interferes and all listen with wide, solemn eyes. Finally the Roman matron squeezes up a bit, makes room for the Frascatana, and the battle subsides. The conduttrice now puts her cap on straight, pats her hair coquettishly, and goes out onto the front platform. 'What a seccatura about that trolley! It really wasn't my fault,' she says in a conversational tone to the motorman. He turns around for one moment, fixes her with a cold eye, and murmurs, 'Che ti possino!' and she retires in haste. . . .

The New Appian Way

"The tram follows the new Appian Way, as important a thoroughfare to-day as the old Appian Way was in the past, for it is the artery which leads to Rome from the Castelli Romani. It is picturesque in its shabby sordidness. Pergolaed wine shops jostle against modern buildings; small factories are crowded in between a car barn and a grain elevator; an unbelievable number of large glass buildings—'moving picture studios'—line the way. In the midst of all this modern ugliness the Raziario, the city custom house, has its office. Here we stop, and an important looking official with an eagle feather in his cap makes an inspection of the tram. He obliges every one to get up while he pokes under the seats with an iron rod to see if anything dutiable is concealed there. He levies taxes on the living presents which the contadine are taking to Rome, and he looks with suspicion at the valise which the Roman matron is carrying. He gives it a few punches, lifts it, and, finding it heavy, asks to have it opened. The Roman matron reluctantly complies and displays to curious, peering eyes an amazing quantity of soiled linen. She is taking it to Rome to be properly laundered, she explains. The washerwomen of Frascati are animals—they tear fine linen to threads on the stones. They are birbaccione, all of them! The custom official retires, and in a few moments we are entering Rome through the narrow archway of the Porta San Giovanni. . . .

"The excitement and jostling to get off the tram is even worse than the impatience the commuters showed on getting in. One would think the life of each depended upon his being the first to alight. And yet, as soon as all are on the sidewalk, they appear to forget their haste and have nothing whatever to do. The contadina stops and buys a paper of 'noccuolini Americani' (Roman for 'peanuts'); the prince steps leisurely into his waiting Fiat; the rotund monsignore lifts himself heavily into a sombre, closed landau with two rusty horses, which carries him, one fancies, straight to the bronze doors of the Vatican; the Roman matron contents herself with a common cab, and the bersagliere, who is met by his sweetheart, perhaps the very one who picked the feathers he is wearing in his hat from her favorite cocks, links his arm in hers and strolls over to a bench beneath the shady trees beside the Baths of Diocletian."

Room for Everybody But the Kiddies



The question of playgrounds is perennial and unsolved. What is New York, the world's biggest city, going to do with her vast child population? It is acknowledged that play is an essential, just as business is an essential. Yet the street is still the only playground for thousands and thousands of active, growing youngsters. "World Outlook" publishes this striking picture of conditions as they persist in 1919—despite all efforts thus far.

Where Guns Have Ceased

—From *L'Illustration*, Paris

PRESIDENT WILSON is visiting the fields where German autocracy was finally overthrown: the vast trench-scarred plains of Northern France, where the fiercest fighting in the world's history took place.

He is seeing with his own eyes the horror of devastation left in the wake of the Hun monster—districts once humming with industry or smiling with agricultural promise and yield.

These visits are being so timed, it is announced, as not to interfere with the sittings of the conference at the Quai d'Orsay. The President journeys, so far as may be possible, by train. But he depends also upon army motor cars for the more intimate inspection of terrain and ruin.

A New Era Dawns in South America

SOUTH AMERICA, with its defects and deficiencies, as well as its wonderful possibilities, is vividly pictured by Maximiliano Aviles in an article on "Contrasts and Tendencies in Latin America" in the "Inter-America Magazine." These twenty republics, stretching from the southern line of the United States to Cape Horn, says the writer, "possess great natural forces which are now latent and now manifest, now slumbering and now self-destroying. They are peoples of incredible contrasts; they possess mines of fabulous wealth which are not exploited; lands of astonishing fertility that are not cultivated; men of energy and vast and noble talent that neither construct nor guide; memories of a past that do not inspire them; visions of a future that do not set them in motion."

Nevertheless the writer finds that "There exists here the fundamental elements of great peoples; a language that unites and mingles them; an ethnic origin that is almost identical; a future that ofers exalted glories through common effort." He finds that:

"There exist other forces and factors still that are more readily translated into positive facts. There is already being formed here a middle class, conscious of its right to liberty and of its civil prerogatives. Ideas of true liberalism are now being disseminated, and the working classes of many of the republics demand well defined institutions and procedures. No longer is our great pride based merely upon bygone glories and subtle idealisms, and both the individual will and the collective conscience seek the exercise of productive work and tangible merit. We catch a glimpse of something like a virile movement. From this spirit of enterprise, this initiative that is being developed, will spring order, system, formulas. The educated classes lean toward the development of agriculture, as yesterday they inclined to the cultivation of the fine arts. The directors of policy will seek victories in the true realization of beneficent deeds and methods, as yesterday they found them in the unconscious subjection of the weak classes. Savings will be brought together to form mobile and active capital, as yesterday they were buried beneath mysterious trees upon the banks of unknown rivers. The youth that hesitates to-day and to-day yields to the drag of an enervating surrounding medium will be able to-morrow to initiate and to win success in the field of an organized and triumphant patria. Idle lands will become fertile estates. Those who crouch to-day will stand erect to-morrow. With the vital impulse of the Latin American and the stimulus of this epoch of such productiveness, we shall learn how to destroy hurtful influences, how to exploit our lands and use our riches, to form generations of solid, active and enterprising men, to spread the idea of an extensive and formidable patria."

Our Hearts and the Russian Children

THE question of Russia is so vast and complex that most of us just admit ourselves appalled and await developments. But there are, as a matter of fact, many special phases which merit concentrated attention pending the settlement of the great central issues. For one thing, there are the little children of Russia, whose lot, in many instances, is about as hard as one can well conceive. A short article in "The Touchstone Magazine" deals with this subject thus:

"A committee for the relief of Russian refugees in Russia was organized in Boston in 1916. Recognized by the American Red Cross in the group of relief organizations before the United States entered the war, it still continues its independence.

"It was formed in response to the personal appeal brought to America by Mr. Thomas Whittemore from his own experience among the Russian refugees driven from their homes in the horrors of flight with the retreating Russian armies before the German advance inWest Russia in 1915. With Mr. Whittemore in the early months of the retreat among the starving and dying on the pitiless roads, later in crowded typhus-stricken barracks, and still later in the izbas of remote villages, American friends of Russia have found the way of relief.

"Until the revolution of March, 1917, Mr. Whittemore was associated with the Imperial Government Relief Committee of the Grand Duchess Tatiana Nicholaievna. At the downfall of the monarchy the committee continued its work under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior of the Emergency Government. Following the collapse of the Emergency Government the committee, pledged only to non-partisan service, has since worked in the Bolshevik régime.

Three Trips Home For Supplies

"Throughout the political changes of the last two years, Mr. Whittemore's work in Russia has been in unbroken continuity. Three times since 1916 he has come to America for money and supplies. When he returned to Russia last autumn he took with him surgical instruments, and boots and shoes. In Japan, on his way to Siberia, he stopped to buy drugs and hospital supplies and to gather up the children's clothes which during the previous summer had been made by the auxiliary committee of Japanese, American and English women.

"An embargo had at that time been placed by the Allies upon all goods destined for Russia, but it was lifted for Mr. Whittemore and he crossed with sixty cases of luggage into Siberia.

"Midway on the journey the Japanese and American embassies passed him going east, and for a moment it seemed as if he must abandon the undertaking, but he continued, and at Vologda found the American Ambassador still in Russia.

"During last winter and spring, besides maintaining a maternity hospital in Samara, Mr. Whittemore devoted himself chiefly to feeding and clothing children. Hundreds of 'round' orphans, as the Russians call children who have neither father nor mother and who do not even know their family name, were fed, clothed and shod. Assistance was given to support a day nursery for children in Moscow whose fathers and mothers, suddenly rendered penniless by the revolution, were obliged to go out to work. Money was given for soup kitchens and in some cases to the very aged.

"Mr. Whittemore's work was principally in Moscow, where he was assisted by the courage, tact and understanding of Mr. Francis, the American Ambassador, and by the late Mr. Madden Summers, the Consul General.

An Intervention of Protected Relief

"Several hundred children, Russians, Jews, Letts, Lithuanians, Poles are now alive, it is declared by Russians, as a result of this care. Through the changing political fortunes of the country, this committee, because it has been associated exclusively with Russians who have in one way or another succeeded in continuing their relief, has not fallen victim to the disorganization of the American Red Cross in Russia. Many groups of wretched, half-fed, scurvy-tortured children were successfully evacuated from Moscow during the spring to houses of the nobility in the country. Not only were these houses, that were in imminent danger of being destroyed by the violent peasants, protected by the presence of the children, but in some places the children actually softened the disposition of the peasant toward the proprietor. Aided by the children themselves, the Russian matrons and directors of these homes have planted potatoes and cabbages for the children's food.

"The gratitude of the Russians for the American help is overwhelming. Even more to them than the material aid is the love and sympathy which prompted it. Hundreds are watching in eager hope for the continuing of the work. Millions will perish this winter in Russia without American help. Here is a committee which may be taken as a type of American national intervention in Russia this winter—an intervention of protected relief."